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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Written statement submitted by International Educational Development Inc., a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[2 March 1992]

1. International Educational Development wishes to draw to the attention of the Commission the loss of life and serious destruction of property taking place in Croatian areas due to the ongoing conflict between the Federal Army and Croatian defence forces.

2. Many villages in Croatia do not exist anymore; they have been completely destroyed. Vukova once with a population of about 45,000 is estimated to be 98 per cent destroyed and uninhabitable. Numbers of inhabitants, including some of the 25,000 Serbians who lived there, were killed. Captured villagers have been held at special camps, where many have been subjected to torture. The same scenario has taken place in many other Croatian areas.

3. At the present time, there are reliable estimates of 720,000 internally displaced persons or refugees from the Croatian areas. Reliable sources also allege 2,900 missing persons, 5,600 captured Croatian combatants and civilians, and more than 16,000 Croatian wounded. Nearly 500 historical and cultural monuments have been damaged or destroyed.

4. The Yugoslavian Army holds Croatian militants and civilians in a number of prisons or camps. Additionally, a number of Croatian militants and civilians are held by Serbian paramilitary forces in camps at Beli Manastir, Jagodnjak, Borovo Selo, Berak, Ovcara, Bijele Vode, Gradac, Glina, Vojnic, Plaski, T. Korenica, Udbina, Gracac, Skabrnja and Benkovac.

5. International Educational Development sincerely hopes that the United Nations peace-keeping force will be able to fulfil its mission. We recognize it will be no easy task, in part owing to a situation of great historical and legal complexity. We believe that neither the majority of the Serbian people nor the majority of the Croatian people harbour deep-seated racial and ethnic hatred, in spite of the present military hostilities. Rather, we understand the situation as primarily a political one that hopefully will be resolved within the context of full compliance with international human rights standards.

6. In the meantime, the international community should respond to the situation with the maximum of humanitarian assistance, especially to the numerous refugees and displaced persons. The international community should also insist that international humanitarian and human rights organizations be given full access to carry out their various assistance programmes for victims of the conflicts.